

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1721

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

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AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

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AMEMBASSY WARSAW

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 SOFIA 1925

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, BU

SUBJECT: BULGARIAN CRITICISM CAMPAIGN

1. SUMMARY: JULY PLENUM POLITBURO DECISION CALLING FOR MEDIA CRITICISM OF PERFORMANCE OF ECONOMIC AND OTHER ENTITIES HAS PRODUCED SUCH CRITICISM, BUT GUNS HAVE, FOR THE MOST PART, FIRED LOW, AT SMALL GAME. END SUMMARY

2. FOR PAST TWO MONTHS, BULGARIAN PUBLIC MEDIA, PLACARDS AND SIGNS HAVE BEEN TOUTING JULY 1-2 PLENUM OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF BULGARIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (BCP) AS HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT EVENT AND "NATURAL SEQUEL" TO THE APRIL 1956 PLENUM (AT WHICH TODOR ZHIVKOV DID IN VULKO CHERVENKOV, THUS CONSOLIDATING HIS CONTROL OVER BCP).

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3. MOST HIGHLY PUBLICIZED RESULT OF JULY PLENUM WAS

ANNOUNCED IN PRESS AUGUST 9. POLITBURO OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE HAD DECIDED AUGUST 3 THAT UNDER SOCIALISM, CRITICISM AND SELF-CRITICISM WERE "AN ACTIVE DRIVING FORCE," THAT ROLE OF MEDIA IN THAT PROCESS WAS "PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT," THAT EFFECT OF PRESENT LEVEL OF SUCH CRITICISM BY BULGARIAN MEDIA WAS "QUITE SMALL," AND THAT WHAT CRITICISM THERE WAS AT PRESENT FOCUSED ON "SMALL, TRIVIAL MATTERS...MINOR FACTS AND DEEDS," AND REFERRED "PRIMARILY TO LOCAL FUNCTIONARIES." (COMMENT: ALL OF WHICH IS TRUE, AND NOT BY ACCIDENT, CONSIDERING WHAT CAN BEFALL ANY JOURNALIST WITH THE WILL TO CRITICIZE MORE TRENCANTLY.)

4. HENCEFORTH, STATED POLITBURO DECISION, CRITICISM AND SELF-CRITICISM THROUGH PRESS, RADIO, TELEVISION, AND CINEMA MUST BE STRENGTHENED, "DIRECTED FIRST OF ALL AGAINST THE WEAKNESSES AND SHORTCOMINGS IN THE MAIN SPHERE OF PUBLIC LIFE...CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESSFUL REALIZATION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC POLICY OF THE PARTY, FOR EDUCATING OF THE SOCIALIST PERSON." EDITORIAL BOARDS, OF COURSE, MUST SHOW "POLITICAL MATURITY" IN PREPARATION AND PUBLICATION. MINISTRIES, CENTRAL DEPARTMENTS, AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS MUST RESPOND WITHIN THIRTY DAYS TO MEDIA CRITICISM.

5. THE DECISION THEN DESCRIBED IMPLEMENTING APPARATUS. UNION OF BULGARIAN JOURNALISTS AND COMMITTEE FOR ART AND CULTURE (CHAIRMAN, LYUDMILA ZHIVKOVA) WILL SUBMIT QUARTERLY REPORTS TO COUNCIL OF MINISTERS ON PRINCIPAL CRITICAL MATERIALS AND BROADCASTS AND ON RESPONSE OF THE CRITICIZED STATE OR ECONOMIC ORGAN. COUNCIL OF MINISTERS WILL REVIEW REPORT AND "TAKE UP AN ATTITUDE" TOWARD THE CRITICIZED ELEMENT. PARTY COMMITTEES AT ALL LEVELS IN CRITICIZED ELEMENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR CREATING "FAVORABLE ATMOSPHERE" FOR "RIGHT INTERPRETATION" OF AND "QUICK, EFFICIENT REACTION" TO CRITICISM. BCP COMMITTEE FOR STATE AND PUBLIC CONTROL WILL FOLLOW PUBLIC CRITICISM, MAKE INSPECTIONS, AND "TAKE NECESSARY MEASURES," INCLUDING IMPOSING OF SANCTIONS, AND INFORM PUBLIC OF RESULTS.

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6. RESULTS OF DECISION HAVE BEEN HIGHLY VISIBLE AT VERY LEAST, AND SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE SNAFUS HAVE BEEN REVEALED. RESPONSIBLE (OR IRRESPONSIBLE) MALEFACTORS AT MIDDLE AND LOW LEVEL OF MANAGEMENT HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AND CRITICIZED, BY NAME AND/OR BY TITLE.

7. FOR EXAMPLE, EQUIPMENT IN A MACHINE-TOOL BUILDING

FACTORY AT PERNIK HAD BEEN BADLY INSTALLED. ONE-YEAR-OLD OIL EXTRACTION PLANT AT TOLBUKHIN WAS FALLING APART. ETHYLENE PRODUCING PLANT, PART OF BURGAS CHEMICAL COMPLEX, WAS UNNECESSARY BECAUSE UNITS CONSUMING THE ETHYLENE PRODUCED WERE NOT YET BUILT, AND BUDGET FOR THOSE UNITS WAS ONE MILLION LEVA SHORT. CONSTRUCTION OF FACILITIES FOR PIG-FATTENING FARM AT RAZGRAD WAS SIX YEARS FROM COMPLETION, FAR BEHIND SCHEDULE AND "DURING THIS TIME, WHERE" - LAMENTED THE RABOTNICHESKO DELO CORRESPONDENT - "WILL THE PIGS BE FATTENED?" (BLAME BEING PLACED ON MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD INDUSTRY).

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8. SINCE THIRTY DAYS RESPONSE PERIOD HAS NOT YET EXPIRED ON ANY OF CRITICISMS IN QUESTION, IT IS NOT YET POSSIBLE TO SEE HOW FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURES ARE OPERATING. HOWEVER, PRESS CONTINUES TO REPORT ACTIONS TAKEN BY COMMITTEE FOR STATE AND PUBLIC CONTROL AGAINST OTHER OFFICIALS WHO HAVE

ERRED SIMILARLY. FOR EXAMPLE, PRESS REPORTED AUGUST 26 NAMES AND TITLES OF NINE SENIOR OFFICIALS (AT DIRECTOR GENERAL, DIRECTOR, OR DEPUTY LEVEL) OF NINE DIFFERENT AGRO-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEXES, STATE ECONOMIC ORGANIZATIONS, AND ECONOMIC COMBINES WHO HAD BEEN SUMMONED BY COMMITTEE TO ANSWER FOR NONFULFILLMENT OF CONTRACTS TO DELIVER COMMODITIES FOR INTERNAL MARKET. AUGUST 11 ARTICLE REPORTED THAT DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL YOVCHO RUSEV AND OTHER EMPLOYEES OF FOREIGN TRADE ENTERPRISE "RODOPAIMPEX" HAD BEEN SANCTIONED BY COMMITTEE.

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9. COMMENT: WORKING OUT OF PROCESS -- CRITICISM, RESPONSE, MONITORING AND POSSIBLE REMEDIAL ACTION--WILL BE INTERESTING TO WATCH IN COMING MONTHS. POTENTIAL AND ACTUAL EXPOSURE TO PUBLIC CRITICISM COULD ACT AS SPUR TO LAGGARD ELEMENTS IN BULGARIAN ECONOMY. EVEN IF ACTUAL IMPACT IS SMALL, VISIBLE PUBLIC PROCESS GIVES POPULATION IMPRESSION THAT GOB IS TAKING STEPS TO DEAL WITH TRIBULATIONS OF LIFE IN BULGARIA -- SHORTAGES OR UNAVAILABILITY OF ESSENTIAL GOODS, SHODDINESS, LACK OF CHOICE, HOUSING SQUEEZE, INVENTORIES OF DEFECTIVE AND UNSALEABLE ITEMS AND ALL THE OTHER ACCOMPANIMENTS OF "SOCIALISM." REVEALED PECCADILLOS AND UNMASKED MALEFACTORS ALSO "EXPLAIN" LARGER MALFUNCTIONINGS OF ECONOMY, SUCH AS SHORTFALLS IN FULFILLMENT OF 5-YEAR-PLAN, AND SOAK UP POTENTIAL CRITICISM OF HIGHER LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP.

10. SOME OBSERVERS HAVE REMARKED THAT CONTROL OVER CRITICISM AND QUARTERLY REPORT TO COUNCIL OF MINISTERS ASSIGNED TO COMMITTEE FOR ART AND CULTURE COULD BE POTENT WEAPON IN HANDS OF AMBITIOUS POLITICIAN. (OTHER OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT DAUGHTER LYUDMILA IS AMBITIOUS BUT NOT ASTUTE ENOUGH TO USE POWER WISELY.) TO DATE, CRITICISM HAS BEEN AIMED AT LOW-TO-MIDDLE LEVEL OF DIRECTION AND HAS BEEN GENERAL. IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE IF IT BECOMES MORE SPECIFIC AND TARGETED HIGHER. END COMMENT.
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